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WARNING

[image]

Before you jump into this LOVELY story thinking that it's all puppies and rainbows and unicorns, I must warn you that this story is everything BUT that.

This story contains things like death, physical and mental abuse on a minor, and also very uncomfortable situations that you may not like.

If these few topics are things that you do not like, then I advise not reading this story. I add these topics and situations due to my own experiences, and it makes it feel more real to me. I also just like traumatizing my characters and making disturbing content.

Kinda.

But yeah, skip if you no likey . I have warned you, so don't come after me if you decide to continue. This is a remake of 'River of Secrets'.

Prologue

[image]

Seven moons ago...

A warrior being 'in love' with an apprentice...

No cat in the five Clans had ever heard of this happening before. It was simply just unheard of and a complete act of abomination to do such a thing. It was cruel, it was sickening... It was gut wrenching and evil, and no cat could have seen this coming.

No cat aside from Rainpaw, the victim.

He had seen this coming. From the first day that Petalstar brought the miserable she-cat to their Clan to the day that she actually had forced him to become her mate, Rainpaw had seen it coming. It seemed as though she was his curse. She was here to hurt him, to torture him, and to make him hate everything about himself for every pathetic lie he had told, for every piece of rotten prey that he had stolen, and for every foul thing he had committed to his Clan. She was his karma.

This was what he deserved. Surely this was meant to make him realize his wrongdoings and make him repent for everything he had done wrong. But instead, it only made his hatred spread. He hated Petalstar for bringing the flea ridden cat to his Clan. He hated his family for being so weak and scared that they refused to do anything to help him. He hated his friends for looking at him with disgust as if *he* were the abuser in the relationship.

They could all die for all he cared for. They were all just as bad as him, even if none of them wanted to admit it.

Rainpaw stared down at his two kittens, his green eyes dim with disdain and disgust as he watched them suckle on their mother. He hated them. He hated them so much that he could feel his entire body quivering with rage. He was tempted to leave, to scream a

thousand curses at his mate and to abandon them like he knew that he should... But he stayed.

Why?

That was a question that Rainpaw didn't know the answer to. He didn't understand why he stayed. He could have run away. He could have told her 'no'. He could have told Petalstar what she was doing to him while they were out training deep in the woods. But he hadn't.

Why?

He didn't know why. He wanted to, but he couldn't find the answer. He had thought that these kittens would have brought him some joy. He had thought that out of this relationship of disgust, cruelty, and terror, that something good might have come out of it by having these kittens with her. But he'd been disappointed to find out that his feelings towards the she-cat and his kittens hadn't changed at all.

He still wanted them to die.

The mother of his two kits suddenly lifted her large head up from her paws, and he felt his body tense up with discomfort as her amber eyes bore into his pelt. He didn't look away from his kits. He continued to stare at them, but he forced his gaze to soften as he finally opened his mouth to speak to his mate.

"They are beautiful, Spottedheart. Very much like you," he murmured softly, hoping to StarClan that he sounded sincere.

Unfortunately, it was very clear by the look on the tortoiseshell's face that he had not sounded at all convincing. She could always tell when he was lying. She was his curse, after all.

"I know that ***she*** is beautiful. She is my daughter, after all," Spottedheart mewed coldly as she stared at him with such unemotional eyes. It was as if she was too good for him to even express anger towards him. "Your son, on the other paw, is weak, like you. A scrawny little thing that shouldn't have been born."

Spottedheart looked down at her two little kits, bug she stared at her large she-kit in particular with sudden pride. Her cold gaze melted slightly as she leaned down to lick their daughter's forehead.

"My daughter was born for greatness. It is foretold in the stars that it is her fate," the she-cat whispered.

She's delusional.

Rainpaw didn't understand any of her nonsense. The stars couldn't talk, nor could she understand what the stars were saying, if they even *were* talking. She didn't speak star. It wasn't a real thing. She was simply just some crazy she-cat who didn't understand half of what she was saying sometimes.

Of course, he refused to say this out loud. He didn't want to cause an argument with her so soon after she had given birth to the little maggots.

"I agree -"

"Stop talking," Spottedheart snapped, looking back up at him with annoyance as she bared her yellow fangs at him. "If I wanted to hear a suck up talk, I would have asked for your sister to come see me."

And Rainpaw did exactly that; he shut up. Rainpaw snapped his mouth shut and nodded in submission to her. This was probably for the best. He wasn't sure if even he could stomach any more of his lies either.

Spottedheart sniffed in contempt as he did what she ordered him to, but she didn't seem pleased by him still. It seemed as though Rainpaw could never satisfy her.

After a moment of silence, Spottedheart finally turned to look back down at her kits. Or, more so at her daughter. It was clear that she already had a favorite kit.

"... Specklekit is a perfect name for my speckled daughter," she murmured gently as she nuzzled her sleeping daughter with her black nose. Her son, on the other paw, was shivering and mewling

pitifully by the end of her paws, and he seemed to be searching for his mother's warmth.

Rainpaw felt a pang of remorse for his son. It wasn't his fault that he was small. It wasn't his fault that he wasn't strong. He was just... Different. Different, like Rainpaw was. There was no shame in being a runt.

Without really thinking about it, Rainpaw slowly leaned down to lick his son's cold pelt. He smelled like moss and dirt, and it was clear that Spottedheart had not fed him yet. He didn't smell like his mother's milk, unlike Specklekit. He was so small... So vulnerable and defenseless. He reminded Rainpaw so much of his kit self.

The kit stopped mewling as Rainpaw licked the top of his small head, and it instead began to crawl closer to his body. Rainpaw was unsure of why it was, but this kit was *special.* This kit - his son - was good. He was going to grow up to be an important cat. Rainpaw could feel it deep inside of him that his son wasn't going to grow up to be like Spottedheart.

Maybe this kit is worth being happy for. Maybe some good did come out of this relationship...

That feeling didn't last very long though.

"I want you to take that runt out to the woods, and I want you to snap it's neck. I want it dead, Rainpaw."

Spottedheart's voice was chilling on its own, but her words of commandment truly struck fear into Rainpaw's heart. He lifted his head up and stared at the tortoiseshell she-cat, and he gave her a slow blink as if he were processing her cruel command.

And then he realized what exactly she was asking of him, and it made him feel sick to his stomach.

Rainpaw couldn't kill this kit. This kit was his kin - his son. He couldn't kill it just because she told him to. No, he had to protect this precious life from her cruelty. He didn't deserve any of the evilness that Spottedheart had stored away in her dark heart. He

had to protect his son.

But he couldn't speak up for his son's own sake. He could hardly speak up for himself...

Instead, Rainpaw said something else.

"But won't someone see me leave the camp with him?" He whispered nervously, his ear tip twitching as his anxiety spiked. He looked over his shoulder, hoping that none of the other nursery cats could hear him, but they seemed to all be sleeping... *Good*. He looked back at Spottedheart. "What if I'm caught?"

Spottedheart's ear flicked in seemingly amusement by his anxiety. She had always found his jittery personality to be hilarious.

"You can either do this for me, or I can kill him myself and make it agonizingly slow," she said in a sickeningly sweet purr as she nuzzled her daughter's head. All of her pride, hard work, and love was being poured into her only healthy kit, and it made Rainpaw want to toss the she-kit in the lake. "Do not bother me with your babbling. I have to take care of my daughter."

And with that the conversation was over. Rainpaw watched as Spottedheart stood up from her nest and leaned down to grab her daughter by the scruff of her neck, and then she turned her piercing amber eyes on Rainpaw. Rainpaw quickly sat up and backed away from the massive she-cat, and he furrowed his brows with concern as he realized that she was going to take their kit out of the warm, safe nursery.

"What are you doing? Where are you taking her?" He mewed anxiously as he glanced down at his shivering son. He then looked back at Spottedheart. "You can't leave the nursery. Especially not with the kits."

Spottedheart rolled her eyes in irritation as Rainpaw mewed like a crying kit. She gently set her plump kit down by her fore paws, and she leaned forward to get in Rainpaw's face. Her breath stank of crow-food, and it took all of Rainpaw's strength to not recoil from her.

"I can do whatever I want with my kit. She is my daughter, and I have the right to leave this Clan with her if I choose to. This place will make her weak, just like the rest of you, and I do not want that future for her," she hissed under her breath, her amber eyes boring into his own green ones. "You can keep your pathetic son alive if that is what you desire, but my daughter needs to be brought up right. I cannot do that here."

Rainpaw flinched as her words cut through him like claws. He couldn't understand why she talked so badly about his weaknesses when she had specifically chosen him to be her mate. If she thought he was so useless, then why had she had kits with him?

"But... But I can't raise our son on my own," he mewed. "I don't have milk or any knowledge on -"

"Then don't raise it. Let Skywish raise it, or Leopardtail. Like I said before, I don't care what you do with it. I'd prefer it to be dead, but I don't have the time to take care of it. I must bring my daughter to where she belongs," she said in a tone that left no room for argument.

Spottedheart leaned back and then bent down to scoop up her kit in her powerful jaws. Her figure was terrifying in the gloom of the nursery, and the moonlight left pale dapples on her dull pelt. She was like an evil spirit that threatened to haunt this place...

Rainpaw swallowed back a nervous gulp as Spottedheart turned her back on him and carefully stalked out of the nursery. Her bushy tail was the last thing he saw as she left him alone with his son. Rainpaw waited for a heartbeat to pass, and then he quickly ran over to Skywish. He reached over and nudged the sleeping queen with his nose. His eyes were wide with terror.

"Skywish. Skywish!" He whispered in a shaky voice.

The plump queen was heavily pregnant and due any day now, but Rainpaw couldn't wait. He knew that this she-cat was strong enough to deal with Spottedheart.

He wasn't sure why he cared about what Spottedheart was doing.

He wasn't sure why he cared about what could possibly happen to his daughter. It was only a moment ago that he had been wishing death upon his two kits, but now? Now, there was some feeling being stirred within him, and it screamed at him to protect his kits.

"Skywish, Spottedheart took off with the kits!" He blurted, giving the sleeping queen one last final nudge that almost sent her falling out of her nest.

Skywish instantly became alert, and she scrambled onto her paws with a bushy pelt and lashing tail. The queen's bright blue eyes scanned the nursery, and her gaze finally fell onto the small apprentice. A flicker of pity flashed through her gaze, but he didn't have time for her grief and emotions. Rainpaw took a step back from Skywish and nodded towards the nursery entrance.

"She just left with the she-kit. I think she's going to do something awful to her," he cried out, unable to hide his fear now.

Skywish shook her head and her once pitiful expression was now replaced with a fierce determination. She quickly padded past Rainpaw, who stayed in the nursery with his son, and she lashed her tail to and fro. She was riled up now, and there was no calming this she-cat down.

"She's not going anywhere with that kit," Skywish hissed before slipping through the moss curtains and disappearing into the clearing.

Rainpaw was trembling with anxiety and fear, and he couldn't bring himself to go back up the brave she-cat. He just couldn't. Instead, he told himself that his son needed him. Yes, that's why he couldn't leave. His son needed him. Skywish would be fine. Skywish was a strong cat. She'd be fine.

Rainpaw then hurried over to his son, and he curled around his fragile little kit. He nudged the kit close to his stomach, and he tried to occupy himself by tending to his son. He could feel his kit shivering violently from the lack of heat in the nursery, and he tried his best to not fidget and squirm as he attempted to warm up his kit.

It was silent out there. It was too quiet... Something wasn't right. Rainpaw could feel it. Something bad was going to happen.

And it's all my fault. Why am I like this? Why can't I be better?

Rainpaw stared at the moss curtain, and that's when he heard a high pitched screech tear through the night.

Word count: 2441

RiverClan

[image]

Meet the cats of RiverClan! They are best known for their thick, sleek coats, skillful swimming abilities, and their large appetite for fish. Unfortunately, they are also rumored to reek of fish as well.

Leader: Petalstar (small, calico she-cat with a heavily scarred figure and dark green eyes)
Apprentice: Mintpaw

Deputy: Beechdew (skinny, light brown tabby tom with white ear tips and amber eyes)
Apprentice: Stormpaw

Medicine cat: Pondfrost (stubby gray tom with a short pelt and gray eyes)
Apprentices: Spottypaw, Peacepaw

Warriors:

Sandyclaw (golden-brown tabby she-cat with white chest fur and amber eyes)
Apprentice: Sparkpaw

Softdusk (mottled gray tabby tom with emerald green eyes)
Apprentice: Tawnypaw

Flintshine (pale gray tabby she-cat with a white patch above her black nose; has amber eyes)

Acornclaw (black tabby she-cat with green eyes)

Russetsky (reddish-brown tabby she-cat with white spots under her hazel eyes)

Snoweye (pale gray tom with white patches; has gray-blue eyes)

Oddtail (dark brown tabby tom with broad shoulders and a short,

stubby tail; has a single green eye)

Pinewater (skinny, dark brown tabby tom with white hind legs and tail tip; has amber eyes)

Bramblefrost (skinny, light brown tabby tom with white hind legs, front paws, and ear tips; has icy green eyes)

Willowfoot (light gray she-cat with light green eyes)

Doeflower (slender, reddish-brown tabby she-cat with white dapples and yellow eyes)

Dewbloom (white-cream tabby she-cat with yellow eyes)

Quickcloud (gray-and-white patched tom with thick fur and amber eyes)

Rootfeather (fluffy, dark gray tom with white streaks under his tail; has green eyes)

Dappledeye (reddish-brown tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes)

Owlspring (cream furred tom with long legs and blue eyes)

Weedfang (tawny tabby tom with white belly fur and blue eyes)

Grayfeather (fluffy tom with dark green eyes, a smokey gray coat, and muscular build)
Apprentice: Woodpaw

Rockfang (smokey gray tabby tom, with yellow-green eyes, a long, bushy tail, and faint dark stripes)
Apprentice: Moonpaw

Deepfang (k_kayish) (tall, wiry black tom, with sea green eyes, and a white tail that is bent at the tip)
Apprentice: Spiderpaw

Rainwing (scrawny, light gray tabby tom with green eyes)

Shellwing (slender white she-cat with pale gray tabby patches; has

green eyes)

Hawktail (dark brown tabby tom, with light blue eyes, handsome features, and wry build)

Crookedfoot (large, silvery-blue she-cat, with light green eyes, faint tabby markings, and broad shoulders; has a broken hind paw)

Fogchest (slender, silver tabby she-cat, with light blue eyes and a small fluffy face)

Wavetail (large, dark blue-gray she-cat, with icy blue eyes, and muscular build)

Oakwhisker (dark, reddish-brown tabby tom, with dark amber eyes, round face, folded ears, and thick fur)

Mothshine (golden tabby she-cat, with black mottled ears, dark green eyes, and thick fur)

Leopardtail (dark brown tabby she-cat, with lighter belly fur, deep green eyes, and slender but muscular build)

Mistsong (dark blue-gray she-cat with a slender build and narrow green eyes)

Streampelt (light silvery-blue she-cat with light blue eyes and a bushy tail)

Jaybounce (muscular gray tabby tom with a white flash of fur on his nose, and has blue eyes)

Apprentices:

Peacepaw (k_kayish) (dark gray, almost black, she-cat, with a white tail and belly, soft fur, and eyes that appear to change colors)

Moonpaw (k_kayish) (stormy gray she-cat, with a gold (left) eye, a brilliant blue (right) eye, and slender build)

Stormpaw (k_kayish) (dark, smokey gray tom, with lighter stripes and dapples, and dark amber eyes)

Woodpaw (k_kayish) (small, slender brown tom, with darker stripes and ears, lighter belly, mask, and toes, and has golden-brown eyes)

Mintpaw (k_kayish) (brown tabby she-cat, with spiky, fluffy fur, bright mint green eyes, and white paws)

Tawnypaw (tabby she-cat with glossy fur the color of honey, and has dark green eyes)

Sparkpaw (glossy white tom, with ginger tabby patches, beautiful blue eyes, and soft fur)

Spiderpaw (glossy, red-and-black tortoiseshell she-cat, with a reddish throat, paws, glowing amber eyes, and well-muscled build)

Spottypaw (small silvery-gray tabby tom with white dapples and green eyes; his hind leg is smaller than the rest of his legs, causing him to limp often)

Rabbitpaw (lanky, light silver tabby tom with a spotted pelt and bright blue eyes)

Queens

Palestone (once slender, dark blue-gray she-cat, with white-gray muzzle, and gray eyes; nursing Tadpolefur's kit, Bumblekit)

Airblossom (k_kayish) (beautiful, glossy furred, white-and-black tortoiseshell she-cat, with gentle, sky blue eyes; nursing Deepfang's kits, Beetlekit and Lowkit)

Skywish (plump, stormy blue-gray she-cat with a bright blue eye, thick, fluffy fur, and round features; has missing patches of fur on her face, neck, and shoulder from unhealed battle wounds)

Featherheart (small, light gray she-cat, with light green eyes, broad shoulders, and muscular build; expecting Bramblefrost's kits)

Kits

Bumblekit (large, thick furred gray tom-kit with blue eyes)

Beetlekit (long limbed, black-and-white she-kit, with dark blue eyes)

Lowkit (tiny, black-and-white tom-kit, with amber eyes)

Elders

Whisperingrose (tall white she-cat, with orange-and-brown tabby patches, mismatched blue and amber eyes, and has soft features)

Moleheart (crippled, dark brown tabby tom, with glaring icy green eyes and badly scarred hindquarters; former leader of RiverClan)

Tadpolefur (dark gray tabby tom with white ears and green eyes)

Froghopper (light gray tabby tom with yellow eyes)

WindClan

[image]

Meet the cats of WindClan! This Clan recently suffered from a wildfire that almost wiped out their Clan, but look at how far they've come! Best known for their wit, speed, and mysterious aura, this Clan is not a Clan you want to mess with!

Leader: Thrushstar (pale gold tabby she-cat with a long tail and amber eyes)

Deputy: Sharptail (massive black tom with spiky fur, white paws and tail tip, and green eyes; has three deep scars across his muzzle)

Medicine cat: Wrenleg (dark ginger tabby tom with long legs and blue eyes)

Warriors:

Tulipshadow (light cream-brown she-cat with green eyes)

Poppyspeckle (reddish-brown tabby she-cat with a torn ear and blue eyes)
Apprentice: Blossompaw

Clawthroat (silver tabby tom with a disfigured throat and blue eyes)

Violetfire (dark brown tabby she-cat with white belly fur and blue eyes; tail is furless and scarred)
Apprentice: Sleekpaw

Brindletoe (tall white she-cat with black-and-brown toes and tail; has amber eyes)

Dustyhaze (long haired, golden-brown tabby tom with green eyes)

Fallenbreeze (dark brown tabby tom with yellow eyes)
Apprentice: Wolfpaw

Rosespirit (dark brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes; left side of her face is hideously scarred)
Apprentice: Cherrypaw

Copperface (slender white tom with tawny facial patches and back patches; has green eyes)

Whitewhisker (long limbed white she-cat with amber eyes)

Emberheart (dark gray tabby she-cat with orange eyes)

Breezesong (large, rose cream tom with blue eyes and a fluffy tail; badly scarred belly with no fur)
Apprentice: Pebblepaw

Crowmask (skinny white tom with a black muzzle, ears, paws, and hind legs; has amber eyes)

Flickerheart (short haired, reddish-brown she-cat with bright green eyes and dark tabby stripes)

Darkwhisker (black tortoiseshell she-cat with blue eyes)
Apprentice: Kestrelpaw

Shyblossom (long haired, pale brown tabby she-cat with green eyes)

Lionstrike (tall, golden-brown tabby tom with green eyes and a scarred chest)

Blackfur (raven black tom with yellow eyes; has a missing right paw)
Apprentice: Buzzardpaw

Apprentices

Blossompaw (fluffy black she-cat with white ears, paws, chest, and tail; has yellow eyes)

Wolfpaw (tall, dappled gray she-cat with blue eyes, spiky tail fur, and a white tail tip)

Cherrypaw (white-and-ginger tabby she-cat with amber eyes)

Pebblepaw (gray-and-white tabby tom with green eyes)

Kestrelpaw (fluffy white tom with amber)

Buzzardpaw (dark gray-and-white tabby tom with green eyes and spiky fur)

Sleekpaw (pretty, gold tabby she-cat, with bright green eyes, and a slender build)

Queens

Antfang (fluffy white she-cat with black ears and blue eyes; expecting Sharptail's kits)

Thornstare (small white she-cat with golden dapples around her blue eyes; nursing Fallenbreeze's kits, Birchkit, Starlingkit, and Splashkit)

Cinderfall (slender, gray dappled she-cat with amber eyes and long limbs; nursing Sharptail's kits, Mistkit, Goosekit, and Ashkit)

Vineheart (white-and-brown tabby she-cat with green-blue eyes; expecting Dustyhaze's kits)

Ravenleap (pure black she-cat with orange eyes and a missing tail; expecting Sharptail's kits)

Shimmerwing (k_kayish) (tall, white she-cat, with black and orange blobs on her back, head, long tail, and has bright green eyes; fostering Thrushstar and Sharptail's kits, Badgerkit, Hollykit, and Flykit)

K its

Birchkit (dark brown tabby she-kit with green eyes)

Starlingkit (white tom-kit with golden tabby paws and blue eyes)

Splashkit (pale golden-brown tabby tom-kit with a white ear and green eyes)

Mistkit (gray dappled she-kit with a white belly and amber eyes)

Goosekit (gray dappled tom-kit with white limbs and amber eyes)

Ashkit (gray dappled tom-kit with green eyes and a white paw)

Badgerkit (tiny black tom-kit with white paws, a fluffy tail, and green eyes)

Hollykit (black she-kit with a predominantly white tail and blue eyes)

Flykit (black she-kit with golden-brown tufts of fur under her tail and belly; has amber eyes)

Elders

Orangemoon (once beautiful, fire orange she-cat, with bright yellow eyes, graying muzzle from age, and has long ears)

Quickwing (long legged, wiry she-cat, with short, dark ginger ticked tabby fur, white tail tip and toes, and orange eyes with a white muzzle from age)

Nightwhisker (scrawny, tall tom, with short black fur, battle scarred pelt, dull green eyes, and a graying muzzle from age)

ShadowClan

[image]

Meet the cats of ShadowClan! Best known for their brutal strength, terrifying battle tactics, and spunk, this Clan is a Clan that could send just about anyone running back to their mommy with their tail tucked between their legs.

Leader: Vixenstar (tall, slender she-cat with russet fur, long limbs, and hazel eyes)

Deputy: Redstripe (small, reddish-brown tabby tom with folded ears and icy blue eyes)
Apprentice: Firepaw

Medicine cat: Sticktail (skinny brown she-cat with faint dapples and yellow eyes)

Warriors:

Patchflame (white-and-ginger tabby tom with green eyes and torn ears)

Harestalker (long limbed, dark brown tabby tom with yellow eyes)

Sorrelnose (muscular white she-cat with yellow eyes)

Duskshadow (brown-and-white tabby tom with green eyes)

Hornetheart (dark ginger tabby tom with a missing tail and amber eyes)

Brownwhisker (dark brown tabby tom with ice blue eyes and a missing toe)

Nettlestorm (white-and-gray patched she-cat with amber eyes and a slit in her left ear)
Apprentice: Flintpaw

Applewhisker (dark cream tabby she-cat with amber eyes)
Apprentice: Plumpaw

Stonetalon (raven black tom with a white tail tip, graying muzzle, and amber eyes)

Myrtlelight (large, rose cream she-cat with white paws and amber eyes)

Daisyflower (reddish-brown tabby she-cat with green eyes and white back splotches)

Berrydawn (light golden-brown tabby she-cat with blue eyes and a ragged pelt)

Moldpelt (black-and-white tom with blue eyes, a thick pelt, and a scar on his chest)

Weaselstrike (skinny, dark brown tabby tom with orange eyes and a scarred muzzle)
Apprentice: Mosspaw

Blazeheart (large, cream tom with dark amber eyes and broad shoulders)

Bonewhisker (white tom with light amber eyes, lean figure, battle scarred pelt, long limbs, and sharp features)
Apprentices: Frightpaw

Lavendersong (k_kayish) (tall, lean, and glossy furred, dark silver she-cat, with darker dapples, a white ear, and green-gray eyes)

Leapingfox (k_kayish) (short, wiry, white tom, with red patches, and gray eyes)

Thistlefall (wiry, spiky furred, pale gray tabby tom, with dark amber eyes)

Grassflower (dark gray she-cat, with gentle, light amber eyes, sleek fur, and has a thick, plumy tail)

Apprentices:

Firepaw (lean, reddish-brown tabby tom, with fierce hazel eyes, long limbs, and sharp features)

Frightpaw (k_kayish) (small, lithe black tom, with a long tail, and ghostly gray eyes)

Mosspaw (plump, dark gray she-cat, with a black stripe down her spine, and has greenish yellow eyes and fainter stripes than her littermates)

Flintpaw (fluffy, dark gray tom, with darker flecks, almost black, and yellow-orange eyes)

Plumpaw (pretty, thick furred, gray she-cat, with thick black stripes and yellow-brown eyes)

Queens:

Waspclaw (short, bright ginger she-cat, with lighter stripes, huge blue eyes, and thick coat; expecting Redstripe's kits)

Elders

Littlefoot (once beautiful, white she-cat, with short, sleek fur, light amber eyes, and long limbs)

Berrybloom (beautiful, sharp eyed cinnamon colored she-cat, with lighter throat, belly, and paws, and hazel eyes)

Frogear (huge tom with torn ears, shredded tail, thick brown tabby fur, disfigured left ear (deaf in left ear), and has amber eyes)

ThunderClan

[image]

Meet the cats of ThunderClan! These cats are best known for their courage, bravery, and loyalty to one another! However, they are also known to be a little stubborn, stuck up, and quite prideful due to their very popular ancestor, Firestar.

Leader: Brackenstar (fluffy tom with thick, golden-brown tabby fur and amber eyes)

Deputy: Curlyspring (long haired tom with curly blue-gray fur, slender figure, and green eyes)

Medicine cat: Rowanstone (long haired tom with curly blue-gray fur, slender figure, and green eyes; has a graying muzzle from age)

Warriors:

Squirrelheart (dark ginger tabby tom with spiky fur and amber eyes)

Bristleface (dark brown tabby she-cat with a white muzzle, spiky fur, and amber eyes)

Roseleap (black-and-white she-cat with yellow eyes)

Aldertail (long haired, golden-brown tabby tom with blue eyes and a little build)

Sweetspirit (light brown tabby she-cat with green-gray eyes)

Tigerwhisker (dark golden-brown tabby tom with white belly fur and paws; has hazel eyes)

Lizardfur (pale brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes)

Barkdapple (white she-cat with brown tabby patches on her sleek tail; has green eyes)

Fernstripe (k_kayish) (slender, brown tabby tom, with darker stripes, a shredded ear, black paw, and orange eyes)
Apprentice: Freepaw

Brightleaf (k_kayish) (small, white she-cat, with brown and orange patches, and bright, leaf green eyes)

Deertail (beautiful, fawn colored she-cat, with light amber-green eyes, thick fur, and small paws)

Dawnsong (rose cream she-cat, with light green eyes, thick heavy fur, and broad shoulders)

Mallowstem (dark brown tabby she-cat, with large heather blue eyes, thick heavy fur, and broad shoulders)

Fawnclaw (fawn colored she-cat, with light amber eyes, long soft fur, and round face)

Bumbletail (small gray she-cat with black stripes, large dark amber eyes, and thick, fluffy fur)

Blossomcloud (white she-cat with ginger tabby patches, bright blue eyes, and strong build)

Hazewhisker (muscular, smoky gray tom, with light green eyes, faint tabby markings, and round face)

Yarrowfur (dark cream tom with large amber eyes, thick, soft fur, and a lion-like mane)

Mudtuft (huge, dark brown tom with a missing tail, yellow eyes, small nick in his left ear, and has a thick coat)

Falconheart (tall, dark brown tabby tom, with thick fur, dark amber eyes, long limbs, and sleek, smooth fur)

Spikepelt- spiky furred, brown tom, with dark green eyes, muscular build, and fluffy coat

Heronsong (black tabby tom with dark amber eyes, sleek short fur, and well-muscled build)

Ryefur (black tom with dark amber eyes, small figure, and a thick, spiky tail)

Apprentices:

Foxpaw (k_kayish) (lean and lithe, white she-cat, with ginger tabby patches, paws, and tail tip, and amber-green eyes)

Freepaw (k_kayish) (short, cream she-cat, with darker patches, fluffy tail, and dark amber-brown eyes)

Smallpaw (small, white she-cat, with black spots, gentle ice blue eyes, thick, feathery fur, and wide ears)

Lightningpaw (fluffy, dark gray tom, with dark green eyes, thick fur, and wild fur)

Snakepaw (lean, brown tabby tom, with thick stripes and spots, dark amber eyes, and sharp features)

Ferretpaw (fluffy, light brown tabby she-cat flecked with white on her paws, copper eyes, and long fur)

Pinepaw (handsome, fawn colored tom, with yellow-amber eyes, faint dark tabby markings, and wide paws)

Queens

Beefrost (white she-cat spotted with brown; has bright yellow eyes and a slender build; expecting Otterleap's kits)

Elders

Spiderspirit (deputy before Vixenstar, small, black she-cat, with milky white-blue eyes, frail body, and thick coat; exiled from ShadowClan after committing an unknown crime against the Clan and bringing Smallpaw to ThunderClan. It is unknown if Smallpaw is her kit or not.)

Blossomspring (tiny, sleek furred she-cat, with a light brown tabby coat, white flecked muzzle, and milky blue eyes)

Hazelstrike (well-muscled she-cat, with long, untidy pale brown tabby fur, a white forepaw (which is broken), dark amber eyes, and a gray-white muzzle from age; leader before Bramblestar and Brackenstar, also Brackenstar's great grandmother)

SkyClan

[image]

Meet the cats of SkyClan! These cats are primarily made up of former kitty pets, rogues, and loners, but that doesn't make them any less of a Clan cat! Known for their kindness, creativity, and overall easy-going personalities, these cats are very easy to befriend!

Leader: Cowstar (plump white tom with black patches; has bright green eyes)

Deputy: Blossomnose (black she-cat with a scrawny figure and amber eyes)

Medicine cat: Robinwatcher (dark brown tabby tom with blue eyes)

Waterfall (silvery-gray tabby tom with dull blue eyes; has scruffy fur and a notch in his left ear)

Warriors:

Leafstripe (tall, dark brown tabby tom with lighter paws, sky blue eyes, and a long face)

Horizonhawk (small, fluffy, white tom with black chest, and paws, light amber eyes, and slightly curly fur)

Sunpetal (k_kayish) (slender white she-cat with orange-and-brown patches/blobs, and bright green eyes)
Apprentice: Mothpaw

Darkflare (k_kayish) (tall and fluffy, dark gray furred tom with gentle orange-amber eyes)

Streambird (k_kayish) (tall, fluffy, sormy gray tom, with a gold (left) eye, royal blue (right) eye, and long legs; very handsome)
Apprentice: Thornpaw

Silvermoon (k_kayish) (lithe, glossy, silvery-blue she-cat with blue-green eyes; very beautiful)
Apprentice: Harepaw

Blackhawk (tall, handsome white tom, with large black patches, soft, fluffy, thick fur, and bright green eyes)

Hollowfang (black tom with a long tail, water blue eyes, long limbs, long, smooth fur, and lean body)

Goldenbird (golden tabby tom with dark amber eyes, soft fur, and broad shoulders)

Butterflyleg (tall tortoiseshell she-cat with light green eyes, thick fur, well-muscled and large build; formerly a kitty pet named Butterfly)

Spruce (lean, tawny tom, with white patches of fur, copper eyes, has unusually long claws and a badly torn ear; formerly a loner)

Timber (tawny tom, with ice blue eyes, long white ears, elegant limbs, and long, smooth fur; formerly a loner)

Beech (tiny, tawny tom, with light green eyes, large white blobs on his face and limbs, and long fur; formerly a loner

Glimmersight (light brown tabby she-cat, with spiky fur, blue-green eyes, and white belly fur)

Oddsight (small, sandy-gray tabby she-cat, with white neck and belly fur, dark golden-brown eyes, and long claws)

Pounceshade (small, plump, fluffy gray tabby she-cat, with bright yellow eyes and thick, wild fur)

Aspenfrost (dark gray tom with green eyes)

Pollentail (glossy white she-cat with a golden-brown tabby tail and yellow eyes)

Lightspark (cream furred she-cat with amber eyes)

Loudfern (light brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes and a missing ear)

Tallbriar (tall white she-cat with brown tabby legs, a tabby brown ear, and golden eyes)

Turtlestep (white tom with ginger tabby splashed paws and tail; has one blue eye and one amber eye)

Twilightheart (pale gray she-cat with darker flecks and green eyes)

Runningtalon (orange tabby tom with white flecked ears and blue eyes)

Briarwish (cream colored she-cat with yellow eyes, long fur, and a bright pink nose)

Morningfrost (cream colored tom with amber eyes, long fur, and white chest fur)

Slowclaw (large, dappled gray tom with blue eyes and folded ears)

Moonfur (pure white she-cat with thick, fluffy fur and amber eyes)

Eagleheart (dark brown tabby tom with thick stripes, white belly fur, and amber eyes)
Apprentice: Goldenpaw

Apprentice:

Thornpaw (dark golden-brown tabby tom, with ice green eyes, smooth fur, and black stripes)

Goldenpaw (lean, light ginger tabby tom, with darker spots, bright gold eyes, sleek fur, and fluffy tail tip)

Mothpaw (golden tabby she-cat with moss green eyes, thick ear tufts, and lion-like mane)

Harepaw (golden-brown tabby tom with ice blue eyes, stocky build, long whiskers, and kinked tail)

Queens

Dullclaw (small, smooth furred, pale ginger she-cat, with darker tabby markings, black ears tips, and green eyes; nursing Goldenbird's kits, Honeykit and Dandelionkit)

Jewelmoon (k_kayish) (tall, slender, tawny furred she-cat, with darker points, and sassy sky blue eyes; nursing Streambird's kits, Cinderkit, Quietkit, Glowingkit, Ravenkit, Heartkit)

Yellowpool (k_kayish) (thick furred, yellow-and-black she-cat, with sharp green eyes; nursing Jaysong's kits, Cricketkit and Lynxkit)

Kits

Honeykit (small, honey gold she-kit with blue eyes)

Dandelionkit (small, darker golden-brown she-kit, with long tufts of fur on her head, and has blue eyes)

Cinderkit (k_kayish) (tawny furred she-kit, with darker muzzle, ears, paws, and tail, and has golden eyes)

Quietkit (k_kayish) (stormy gray tom-kit with light blue eyes)

Glowingkit (k_kayish) (light yellow she-kit, with darker muzzle, ears, paws, and bright green eyes)

Ravenkit (k_kayish) (dark gray tom-kit with dark blue eyes)

Heartkit (k_kayish) (tawny furred she-kit, with darker muzzle, ears, paws, tail, and golden-copper eyes)

Cricketkit (k_kayish) (short, light gray-yellow she-kit with lively green eyes)

Lynxkit (k_kayish) (cream she-kit with, darker yellow-orange fur, black stripes and dapples, and light blue-green eyes)

Elders

Creekrain (thin she-cat, with a scarred gray muzzle, short, blue

tabby fur, and wide yellow eyes)

Jackdawclaw (tall, thin tom, with long, silky, pale gray tabby fur, and a single yellow-green eye; other eye was torn out by Moleheart)

Webdapple (small she-cat, with short, sleek, white-and-black patched fur, one oddly small ear, and glimmering emerald green eyes; leader before Rainstar and Cowstar)

The Saviors

[image]

Meet the group of cats that call themselves 'The Saviors'. These cats are violent, cunning, and quite odd. Not much is known about these cats aside from their violent tendencies and hatred towards the Clans. These are the known members of The Saviors.

Possible leaders:

Skull (huge white tom with thick fur, blue eyes, and a torn left ear; fangs poke out from his upper lip)

Barb (sandy-gray she-cat with white front paws and tail tip; has bright green eyes)

Known followers:

Sparky (ginger tabby she-cat with a white eye patch and white splotched tail; has amber eyes)

Spring (light brown tabby she-cat with some ginger and white patches; has dark green eyes)

Dipper (dark brown tabby tom with a ragged pelt and light golden-brown eyes)

Pepper (black she-cat with a white hind paw and bright blue eyes; has a pink nose)

Emerald (silvery-gray she-cat with long fur, fluffy tail, and green eyes)

Shrimp (light, sandy-gray tom with a white belly, paws, and tail tip; has green eyes)

Charm (white she-cat with a left green eye and a right blue eye)

Lichen (dark gray tabby tom with long, untidy fur, torn ears, and a

single amber eye)

Courage (black tom with a white tail tip and amber eyes)

Thorn (k_kayish) (sandy-yellow mackerel tabby she-cat, with splashes of white, a scar down one side of her face, and hazel eyes)

Kitty pets, loners, and rogues

[image]

Kitty pets: cats who live with two-leg's and avoid Clan life; typically seen as lazy or feather-brained by Clan cats. They are not seen too often by Clan cats.

Kitty pets

Flower (k_kayish) (long haired, white she-cat, with yellow and dark brown streaks in her coat, and light green eyes)

Felix (small white tom, with black-and-ginger patched paws and spine, has bright green eyes, and a black collar)

Coke (black she-cat, with long, silky fur, ginger splotches, stumpy tail, light green eyes, and a red collar)

Pepsi (long haired, black-and-white patched she-cat, with a stumpy tail, pink nose, torn ears, scarred pelt, icy blue eyes, and a white collar)

Mary Sue (small white she-cat, with black, ginger, and light brown splotches all over her silky fur, has bright green eyes, and a pink collar; very beautiful)

Mitz (unusually tiny black she-cat with small scars around her muzzle and on her pelt, white patches around her yellow eyes, limbs, and stumpy tail and has a blue collar; formerly a ShadowClan warrior named Stillshadow)

Bambi (tall, fawn mackerel tabby she-cat, with short fur, yellow eyes, and has a pale pink collar)

Loners: cats who don't belong to either Clans or two-leg's, but rather live on their own doing their own thing. They rarely cause trouble for the Clans.

Rogues: dangerous cats who live remotely on their own, but

sometimes in pairs or groups; they cause mischief for the Clans

Loners/rogues

Badger (k_kayish) (tall, sleek, black tom with badger-like markings, long tail, and icy blue eyes)

Obsidian (k_kayish) (lean, black tom with white belly fur, pale yellow eyes, and a long tail)

Darkling (k_kayish) (dark gray tom with darker dapples, and dull sky blue eyes)

Chapter One

[image]

I apologize for any grammar mistakes or mistakes in general...

Several moons later...

RiverClan was in distress. Everything around them seemed to be crumbling into pieces, and no cat knew what to do anymore. Nothing felt right, and Spottypaw couldn't help but wonder if things had *ever* been right in the first place. This was the life he had been raised into, so nothing came as a shock to him anymore.

But this was entirely unacceptable.

Screeches of agony poured out from Featherheart's mouth as she writhed around in the nursery den. Spottypaw stood beside her, his paws firmly but gently sliding around her round belly in an attempt to figure out how many kits that she should be expecting. Pondfrost was watching with an intense gaze as he waited for the she-cat to start pushing. They didn't have time to waste. They had injured cats to tend to in the medicine den; too many for Peacepaw to see to all on her own.

"Why is this taking so long? It can't be that hard to push, for StarClan's sake!"

Spottypaw didn't have to turn around and look to know who was making those snippy comments. Featherheart's mate, Bramblefrost, was pacing around the pained she-cat as she tried to focus on pushing instead of focusing on her excruciating pain.

Bramblefrost stopped in front of Featherheart, and he glared down at her stomach. His ear twitched with annoyance. "And stop screaming. It's hurting my ears."

"I'm - I'm sorry," Featherheart grunted out as she dug her claws into her mossy nest. She closed her eyes, her ears flat against her head

as she let out a pitiful wail. "I'm trying! It hurts so much."

Featherheart took a deep breath and then stopped pushing for a moment. Bramblefrost flicked his tail to the side, his cold gaze turning into one of curiosity as he watched his mate's movements. Spottypaw glanced over at Featherheart, a worried look in his eyes as he let his mind take him to a dark place. For a heartbeat he thought that she was dead. But then, before he could react, Featherheart rolled onto her belly and began to push again.

Skywish pushed her way between Bramblefrost and Featherheart, and she crouched beside her little sister. Unlike Bramblefrost, Skywish had a much softer approach to the first time queen.

"You're doing fantastic, Featherheart. Just keep pushing. Don't stop, you're doing great!"

Skywish's words of encouragement seemed to annoy Bramblefrost, because he snorted in disbelief before walking over to join Pondfrost. He glanced down at Featherheart's lower body, and then his eyes widened with horror. The tom quickly sat back up and he took a few steps back, his eyes glued onto Featherheart.

"Great StarClan, that's disgusting," he hissed out.

Featherheart's head quickly snapped in his direction, her eyelids fluttering open as she rasped out, "wait, what?"

"I see the first kit's head," Pondfrost meowed over her, his tail tip slapping the young tom's muzzle to shut him up, "keep at it, Featherheart."

Spottypaw felt a ripple going through the she-cat's body, but he could tell that this was extremely difficult for Featherheart. Featherheart was gritting her teeth in an attempt to be quiet, and she was truly giving it her all... But she wasn't getting anywhere with this kit. This caused Spottypaw to feel a bit of concern for her. He then looked over at his mentor.

"Should I apply some pressure?" He murmured. He kept his voice low, not wanting Featherheart to overhear him and stress out even

more than she already was. "We still have one kit more after this, and that one feels much bigger than this one."

Pondfrost hesitated for a moment, but then he gave Spottypaw a nod of approval. This she-cat needed a little bit of help in order to birth her kittens. It wasn't completely uncommon. There was no need to worry.

Don't stress yourself out about this. Featherheart's okay. Peacepaw is okay. Peacepaw can handle herself for a moment. This won't take too much longer, Peacepaw.

Spottypaw gently slid his paws down the squirming she-cat's body, but he began to slowly apply some pressure once he got closer to the kitten. He had to be careful. He didn't want to potentially cause a mishap.

Bramblefrost lifted his chin, peering down at the mess with narrowed eyes, while Pondfrost kept an eye on the kit's head. He had done this many times before, but not during such hard times like these. He had to make sure that Spottypaw was paying attention and learning how to do this properly, but he also had to make sure that Peacepaw wasn't being overwhelmed and that the others were okay.

Spottypaw felt bad for his mentor, but he couldn't stop and think about it too much at the moment. He had to focus on helping Featherheart conceive. However, before Featherheart could start pushing again, Bramblefrost began to make a few crude remarks on his mate's struggle once more.

"Mothshine didn't take this long," he muttered, making his voice loud enough for Featherheart to hear over her rapid panting. "Neither did Airblossom. It didn't take her long at all, actually." Bramblefrost then curled his lips at Featherheart, a glint of distrust in his eyes as he stared at her. "Is something wrong with you?"

Skywish's head snapped upwards instantly, and her tail began to prickle with fury. Her pupils narrowed, and her own lips began to curl as she quickly gave into her anger.

"Is something wrong with *you*? Have you ever carried kits and then given birth to them, Bramblefrost? Have you ever had to push out something that's bigger than a ***rock*** from your body? Where is your sympathy? Where is your compassion and consideration for my little sister?"

"Spottypaw," Pondfrost mumbled.

"On it," he responded. Spottypaw didn't hesitate to abandon his task. He knew that he had to get Bramblefrost out of the nursery so that Featherheart could conceive her kits in peace. She couldn't focus while Bramblefrost was criticizing her every other heartbeat.

Spottypaw quickly rose to his paws, and Featherheart's eyes began to water. Her ears perked up for a moment as she saw Spottypaw leave her side, but then she started to tear up. A twinge of pity pulled at Spottypaw's heartstrings, but he quickly shook it off.

"It's not my responsibility or burden to deal with," Bramblefrost retorted, eyeing Skywish as if she had bees in her head. "But I understand that she-cats are naturally weaker than a tom, so of course she would struggle a little with birthing my kits..." He then glanced down at Featherheart, and a dark expression crossed his face. "But she's being overdramatic at this point. I've seen faster births than this, and less noisy ones as well -"

"Hey, Bramblefrost." Spottypaw padded over towards the taller tom, and he furrowed his eyebrows in order to give himself a nervous expression. "Could you come with me to go get a piece of prey? Featherheart is going to be very hungry after giving birth, and I'm not sure what she likes," he lied.

Skywish snorted in annoyance at the interference with her brewing argument with Bramblefrost, but she dropped it as soon as Bramblefrost shifted his focus from the two sisters to Spottypaw.

With a tilt of his head, Bramblefrost gave Spottypaw a quick look up and down, inspecting the apprentice as if he were a speck of dirt or a flea.

"I want to see my kits when they come out," Bramblefrost meowed

coldly.

Stupid fox-face. Spottypaw flicked his ear with the slightest bit of annoyance, but he didn't lose his composure.

"I understand, but we'll be back before they're born. I just need to do this really quick. Plus," he added smoothly as he glanced back at Featherheart, "she's probably going to take a while. You'll have plenty of time to get her some prey and such before your kits come into the world."

Spottypaw looked back at Bramblefrost, and he was pleased to see that the young father seemed to be considering Spottypaw's request. Bramblefrost clearly wasn't too reluctant to leave his mate.

A screech of pain from Featherheart caused both Spottypaw and Bramblefrost's ears to flatten with alarm, but that was all it took to make Bramblefrost make up his mind. The mewls and cries of pain appeared to annoy the tabby tom, and Spottypaw watched with pleasure as the warrior rose to his paws with a stiff nod.

"Fine," he growled. "But let's make it quick. I don't even know *why* she would need something to eat. We've got more important cats to be offering our prey to."

The tom turned his back on Spottypaw and the others, and he quickly crossed the nursery to get to the exit. Spottypaw limped after him, his tail swishing to and fro with relief as he finally got Bramblefrost out of the nursery.

Now all I have to do is keep him OUT of the nursery while Featherheart gives birth... That's not going to be difficult at all.

Bramblefrost was cunning and obnoxious, and he was hard to keep under control for most cats, but the best thing about him was that he could be distracted by his own success and achievements. All Spottypaw had to do was get him talking about himself, and that would give poor Featherheart plenty of time to do what she had to do.

Spottypaw came up beside the warrior, but he made sure to not

surpass the tom; Bramblefrost hated it when others walked in front of him, and he'd given Spottypaw an earful about it before. He tried to make sure not to do it anymore.

"Does Featherheart have any names picked out for the kits'?" He meowed out of slight curiosity. "You two are expecting at least two kits. Are you two each naming one?"

Bramblefrost's left ear flicked with interest, but he kept his eyes forward and continued towards the small heap of prey near the willow stump.

"I haven't decided yet. I want to see them first before I name them. I want their names to suit them," he explained calmly. He closed his mouth for a mere moment before speaking once again. "I'm hoping to have them look like me, of course. I need something about those kits to resemble me, or this'll all be for nothing."

"Oh. Right."

Good luck with that, Spottypaw thought with an imaginative scoff.

All of Palestone's kits had come out looking just like her, or at least resembling her in many ways, and her own kits' kits looked like their parents as well. None of them resembled or looked like the other parent. Every cat related to Palestone either had blue-ish fur or a slightly gray or silvery coat.

Bramblefrost was going to be in for a surprise once he saw the kits.

"Do you think they'll both be she-kits, toms, or one of each?" Spottypaw asked. He had to keep Bramblefrost's mind off of checking on his mate.

Bramblefrost arrived at the fresh-kill pile and his tail tip twitched ever so slightly as he inspected the prey. He didn't seem too happy with his options, which consisted of a frog, two newts, and a few scrawny mice.

"I *want* two toms. She-cats are emotional creatures and so difficult to deal with and be around. I haven't met a she-cat that *wasn't* whiny, obnoxious, or overly dramatic and confident," he hissed

bitterly. He narrowed his eyes, and Spottypaw could tell that he had a cat or two in mind as he spoke passionately about his dislike towards she-cats. "I wouldn't have to be soft on my sons, and I could teach them how the real life works."

Spottypaw nodded his head with a fake understanding. He didn't agree with Bramblefrost's way of thinking, but he could at least pretend to.

"That makes sense..." He padded up to Bramblefrost and he sat down to give his limbs a break. His forepaw still hurt from stepping on a thorn earlier while hunting for herbs, but it was slowly beginning to feel better. "If I had kits, I don't think I would mind a she-cat or a tom -"

Before Spottypaw could explain why he wouldn't care about having a daughter or a son, he was rudely cut off by Bramblefrost, who let out a loud, disapproving snort.

"If? You're a medicine cat, and a runt at that. Even if you weren't a medicine cat, you would still be pretty useless. No cat would even be interested in you. You'd risk passing on your disabilities to the future generation, too. We can't have a bunch of crippled runts for warriors, now could we?"

Bramblefrost glanced over his shoulder and stared Spottypaw down. It was almost as if he were *daring* the apprentice to defend himself. The snobby warrior *wanted* to see Spottypaw snap, to defend himself and argue with the tom like he always did. Spottypaw always took Bramblefrost's bait... And today was no different.

"I'd watch your stupid mouth if I were you," Spottypaw snarled angrily while quickly rising to his paws and taking a threatening step towards the warrior. He lashed his tail to the side, his fur already bristling with fury as he glared up at the tom. "I'll rip your pelt clean off."

"Oh?" Amusement sparked in the tom's icy green eyes, and the corner of his mouth twitched into a slight smile. "I think it's you who should be watching your mouth, Spottypaw." Bramblefrost leaned forward towards him, and his crooked smile transformed

into a wide, toothy smirk. "Because that's a mighty sick threat coming from such a pathetic excuse of a cat... A cat that I could easily take down if I chose to... And you know that more than any other cat here... *Don't you, Spottypaw?*"

A wicked glint appeared in Bramblefrost's gaze as a chill ran through Spottypaw's body. The anger, fury, and embarrassment quickly went out like a fire, and it was replaced with pure fear and a faint memory of agony seared his mind. He lowered his tail, forced his pelt to lie flat, and he took a step back from the warrior. His gaze fell towards the ground, and he felt like his heart was lodged in his throat. He felt like he couldn't breathe.

He didn't want to speak. There was no point in speaking. He didn't know what he would, or even could, say in response to the tom's spine tingling words. Bramblefrost knew just what to say to shut him up, and there was nothing Spottypaw could do about it.

And he knows that...

A chuckle followed after a few heartbeats of silence, and it made Spottypaw's stomach twist with unease. He hated that chuckle. He hated how the tom purred, laughed, and spoke. He hated everything about Bramblefrost.

"You're adorable," Bramblefrost murmured with a smile etched into his voice. "But listen... You're not *that* much of a waste of life. You have some potential. It's just not a lot," he snickered.

Spottypaw stayed silent, his eyes still fixated on the camp ground. He could hear his Clanmates chatting, all of them most likely gossiping about Bramblefrost's kits or the horribly injured warriors that Peacepaw was tending to. None of them paid Spottypaw and Bramblefrost any mind though. None of them had any idea that Spottypaw was frozen in fear.

Bramblefrost was quiet for a moment. Spottypaw knew that he just wanted him to say something. He wanted Spottypaw to get confrontational. He just wanted an excuse to get Spottypaw in trouble. But Spottypaw knew better.

After a couple of heartbeats of intense silence, Bramblefrost realized that he would not be getting a reaction out of the apprentice. He looked away from the slightly smaller tom, and he peered over at the camp entrance. With a tiny twitch of his whiskers, he started towards the entrance.

"Featherheart likes birds. I'll be out for a few," he meowed flatly. All of the sadistic emotion that he once carried was now gone. "Make sure that Featherheart doesn't give birth until I get back."

Spottypaw finally lifted his head, and he watched as the warrior disappeared into the shadowy tunnel. The last thing he saw was the warrior's tail tip, and then he was gone. Now, Spottypaw was left feeling shaken. He felt terrified...

I never knew that my best friend would turn out to be my worst enemy. I wish he would have died. Life would be better without him in it.

Spottypaw turned around and tried to take a deep breath. The crisp air burned his nose, but it helped take his mind off of Bramblefrost a little. It wasn't by much, but it was better than by nothing at all.

His heartbeat was obnoxiously loud in his ears, and it hammered in his chest like a bird trapped in a lion's claws. It was an awful feeling, but it was one that he would have to deal with alone. Of course, he was used to it by now. He'd been dealing with Bramblefrost's bullying for a few moons by now, and he forced himself to get over it every single time. It wasn't like he could do anything about it.

No one would listen to him, even if he did try to say something. No one would ever believe him over Bramblefrost. There was no point in trying.

"Hey!"

A sharp voice yanked Spottypaw out of his thoughts, and he quickly shifted his focus onto one of the cats by the warriors den. Sitting outside of the den was Pinewater, Shellwing, and Streampelt, and all three of them were glaring coldly at him as if he were a rat about to nipple on their last piece of prey. It was Pinewater who

had yelled at him, and Spottypaw felt his heart sink as the warrior opened his mouth to say something else. Today simply just wasn't Spottypaw's day...

"Why are you just standing there?" The dark tabby snapped with irritation, his tail lashing to and fro as he glared at the apprentice from across the camp. "My brother is about to have kits, and we have four injured cats who need help. They all each need tending to, so why are you doing nothing?"

Shellwing snorted, her eyelids hooded and a lazy frown on her face. "Apprentices these days... Useless."

"Some of them," Streampelt added quickly, an annoyed expression on her face at Shellwing's comment. "Skywish's kits are pretty good. I like them."

"Stormpaw annoys my pelt off," Pinewater growled. "He and Moonpaw are both arrogant little snails."

"Mmm... I think Mintpaw is pretty obnoxious. She never shuts up," Streampelt said with a shrug. She didn't seem to be as passionate about the conversation as Shellwing and Pinewater, but she also had no problem adding to it. "She's like a woodpecker."

"I ***hate*** Spiderpaw," Shellwing meowed over Streampelt's last sentence, and she looked up at the cloudy sky with boredom now. "She's... Like... She's, like, all that. But she's not. You know?"

Spottypaw blinked at the young she-cat, and even her companions seemed to be confused by her comment about Spiderpaw. He personally wasn't very close with Spiderpaw, but he liked the she-cat. She was funny and friendly, given that she could be a little loud and act on her emotions without thinking about it first. Still, she was a good cat.

Without saying anything, Spottypaw turned his back on the three cats and padded over to the medicine den. He could hear Streampelt clearing her throat while Pinewater continued to talk badly about Stormpaw and Moonpaw. Spottypaw wasn't in the mood to argue with those three. All they were was trouble. He

learned that most of the younger warriors were friends with Bramblefrost, and so that meant that most of them didn't like him.

I don't understand why, he thought with a bit of hurt. *I haven't done anything to Bramblefrost. Not really, anyway...*

A faint memory of his kithood flashed through his mind. It was torturous, really. A painful reminder of the friendship that he and Bramblefrost once had... Spottypaw could remember a time that the two of them would sneak out of camp and go hunting. He could remember the night that the two of them snuck into SkyClan's territory, and how they had climbed one of the maple trees. He could remember sitting with Bramblefrost on the branch, staring at the stars... And then he could remember how he had ruined *everything* with just a few words.

It was all Spottypaw's fault that Bramblefrost hated him.

Spottypaw shook his head with a grimace, and he hurried into the medicine den. He didn't want to think about the past. He didn't want to even think about his past friendship with Bramblefrost. That was gone now. He would never get that friendship again. He had to come to terms with that now.

A strong stench filled Spottypaw's nose as he entered the medicine den, and his stomach tightened in repulsion. He was quick to recognize that as the scent of death.

Word count: 3,5 44

Chapter Two

I apologize for any grammar mistakes or mistakes in general...

Peacepaw sat beside a lanky, pale silver tom, and Spottypaw could tell almost at once that this cat was dead. He wasn't moving. He wasn't breathing. Rabbitpaw was gone. There was blood slowly oozing from a vicious wound on his neck, and Spottypaw assumed that was what had caused the older apprentice to pass away. His neck had been too badly punctured to treat properly.

Rainwing was slouched over Rabbitpaw's body, his head low and his face hidden away as he took gravely breaths. The tom's ear was torn, and he had a few minor scratches on his flank. Behind Rainwing were four other warriors, and all of them were in severe condition.

Jaybounce was wheezing with each breath he took, and his eyes were covered with chewed up herbs that stunk the place up. His whole face seemed to be bloody and scratched up. If he lived, he would hardly be recognizable...

Dappledeye's tail was bent in several places, and her body twitched and jerked around every other heartbeat. She had two major bite wounds on the top of her head, and each wound was smothered in pulp and wrapped with spider webs. Last was Beechdew, and he appeared to be hanging on by a claw. His bottom jaw was crooked, a few of his teeth were missing or stuck in his upper jaw, and his belly was badly clawed. Not even spider webs could hide the blood from his wounds.

Peacepaw had to deal with all of this on her own... I should have been here to help her. I could have helped her save Rabbitpaw . I shouldn't have left her alone!

Fury coursed through Spottypaw's pelt, but not because he was mad at himself. He was furious that Pondfrost would leave Peacepaw all on her own to do such a mighty task. He should have let Spottypaw

help her. Now she would have nightmares about this for the rest of her life...

She doesn't deserve this burden. This isn't fair.

Spottypaw quickly pulled himself out of his thoughts, and he forced himself to gather his strength to speak. He wasn't sure what to say. Death was never something that he was fond of discussing.

"I... I'm sorry, Peacepaw," he whispered. His tail sank to the floor, and he blinked guiltily at his friend. "I shouldn't have left you. This is my fault."

"Don't," the gray she-cat murmured quietly, lifting her paw to gently rest it on his chest. "The only cat I blame is the cat that did this to him. Rabbitpaw knew that he wasn't going to make it... Moonpaw was able to say goodbye to him before he went to join StarClan."

Spottypaw internally cringed at the mention of StarClan, but he said nothing in relation to her belief. He simply nodded with grief.

"Have you told Shellwing yet?" He mumbled. He glanced sideways at Rainwing, and he felt a pang of sympathy towards him. Rainwing had raised Rabbitpaw for Shellwing due to her lack of care for her kit, and he had loved the apprentice as if he were his own son.

It must hurt to lose the only family member that cared about him. Now Rainwing only has Shellwing again.

Peacepaw furrowed her eyebrows with distraught at Spottypaw's question, and her neck fur prickled up by the slightest bit. Spottypaw was surprised by this small sign of anger from her. It was rare for Spottypaw to see her in such a negative mood.

"I did. And all she said was '*oh. That's sad.'* She showed no emotion towards the death of her own kit," Peacepaw rasped.

Spottypaw's jaw almost dropped with shock at Peacepaw's alarming news. He hadn't expected Shellwing to be so apathetic towards her own kit. Sure, she hadn't been involved in Rabbitpaw's life or shown any interest in him, but Spottypaw still thought that she would feel crushed that her son had died so horrifically.

She's not right in the head. Something's wrong with that she-cat... There has to be something wrong with her.

Rainwing winced out of the corner of Spottypaw's eye, and he couldn't help but feel a little bit of pity towards the warrior. Rainwing didn't deserve to have such horrible luck with his kin. Spottypaw didn't know him very well, but he was aware that the tom was quiet, skittish, and that he didn't like to talk much. Spottypaw assumed that it was because his past involved lots of death and mainly losing family members.

Not that I really care about his past. That's his trauma, not mine.

"The worst part about it is that the last thing Rabbitpaw wanted was to tell her that he loved her. It kills me that Shellwing couldn't even bother to come see him one last time. He kept asking to see her, to talk to her... And she *refused* to see him." Peacepaw closed her eyes bitterly as her body began to tremble with emotion. It hurt Spottypaw to see her like this.

He hated that she had to carry all of this on her shoulders.

I shouldn't have left her alone. It's all my fault. I shouldn't have listened to Pondfrost . I could have saved her from this. I could have at least taken responsibility for Rabbitpaw's death if anything.

"She's just in shock," Rainwing suddenly muttered. He lifted his head up to give Peacepaw a dark look. His tail tip flicked at a piece of leaf stuck to his flank. "You don't know anything about my sister."

"She left Rabbitpaw to die," Peacepaw growled back, not budging even in the slightest bit towards her feelings for Shellwing. "All Rabbitpaw wanted before he died was to say that he loved his mother, the only cat in the Clan that *didn't deserve his time or love.* But no. She refused to see him. Instead, she went to see Pinewater and Bramblefrost, and stayed outside the entire time!"

"Moonpaw was the one who stayed by his side while he died. Rabbitpaw didn't even ask to see Moonpaw because the only cat he wanted to see was Shellwing. He wanted her to know that he

forgave her for abandoning him, and that he still loves her." Peacepaw raised her chin ever so slightly, and she narrowed her eyes at the young tom. "I don't know about you, Rainwing, but that doesn't sound like a cat in shock."

"It sounds like a cat who doesn't care about anyone except herself."

A sharp tension prickled in the air as the two cats had a stare off. Rainwing looked as though he were a heartbeat away from clawing off Peacepaw's whiskers, but Peacepaw stayed calm despite the disappointment and anger in her golden gaze. Spottypaw wasn't sure what to do exactly in that situation. He wanted to say something, but he didn't want to make the situation worse.

Suddenly, Rainwing rose to his paws and he snorted in contempt. "You don't know Shellwing like I do. And you never will."

And with that, Rainwing was gone. He padded out of the medicine den with his head low, his tail drooping, and a frustrated glint in his green eyes. Peacepaw had to hold back an eye roll as the warrior left the two apprentices alone, but her focus quickly shifted back onto Rabbitpaw's cold body. Spottypaw peered over at the other cats in the den, but they were all either unconscious or just trying to relax and rest after the brutal attack they had suffered. Relaxation, however, would never last long.

Not with the Saviors on the prowl.

Spottypaw looked back at his friend, and he sighed. Death and destruction hid from no cat. Not even the young could escape the darkness in life.

"... How's Featherheart doing?"

Peacepaw's tone had shifted from sorrow and irritation to worry. Spottypaw could also detect a bit of impatience and anticipation in her voice. She was one of the few cats in RiverClan that were excited for Featherheart's litter to arrive.

Spottypaw snorted. "I'd say it's going good, but that would be a lie. Bramblefrost wouldn't get out of her fur until I sent him on a

hunting trip."

"He just can't help himself," Peacepaw muttered. "He's a bully."

"He's just *anxious*," Beechdew growled. The two apprentices looked his way, eyes wide with surprise by the deputy's sudden spark of life, and they met his sharp gaze with flattened ears. "You two should know better than to be gossiping about a fellow Clanmate."

"He's also new to being a father and a mate. He's... so young, too. You must have patience for him," Dappledeye added. Her voice was so raspy and low that it was almost impossible to hear her. Spottypaw could barely make out what she had said.

Peacepaw's whiskers twitched, a sign of disbelief from the young she-cat, but she refrained from saying anything. Spottypaw, however, did not.

"A lot of cats are new to being a parent and a mate, but I don't see or hear about them criticizing their mate while they're trying to have kits -"

Beechdew quickly cut Spottypaw off with a flick of his tail. "That doesn't mean that you should gossip like a pesky SkyClan cat. You two are old enough to know better. Your mothers raised you better than that," he added.

"And some parents react differently to things," Dappledeye chipped in. "It just depends on the cat... and the situation. We all know that Bramblefrost han... handles almost all situations very well. This is simply something that he's... new to."

After struggling to speak, Dappledeye burst into a fit of coughs, and Peacepaw quickly rose to her paws to go tend to the she-cat. Spottypaw was a little more than surprised that they had the strength to talk; their wounds looked excruciatingly painful.

Hopefully their wounds give them a new reason to shut up.

"Spottypaw!"

The booming voice almost made Spottypaw jump out of his pelt,

and he quickly scrambled onto his paws. His heart was pounding in his chest, his fur slightly spiked, but he forced his fur to lie flat as Bramblefrost came running into the den. The tom's eyes were ablaze with fury, but then he noticed the other cats in the den. His eyes narrowed, but he too made his pelt lie flat. He lowered his voice into a whisper.

"I thought that I *told* you to make her wait for me," he hissed. "I missed the birth of my kits."

Spottypaw frowned upon the tom's reasoning for the outburst, but he didn't get a chance to say anything. Peacepaw was right in front of Bramblefrost at once, with her eyes round and full of excitement and joy.

"The kits are here?! How many are there? Are they okay? Was it actually just two kits, or did she have more? Is she okay?"

Bramblefrost glanced away from Spottypaw and he shot Peacepaw a small glance, as if her harmless questions were causing him an intense headache.

"I don't know. All I know is that I missed my kits birth," he snarled. He turned his gaze back onto Spottypaw, and he forced a low purr. "Spottypaw, I thought that I said -"

"Spottypaw, let's go see them!" Peacepaw meowed. She rubbed her shoulder against Spottypaw's, but then she looked back at the injured cats. Her eyes then flickered with guilt as she looked down at Rabbitpaw's body. There was no warmth left in him... "Oh, wait..."

Beechdew stared at Peacepaw and Spottypaw for a single heartbeat, and then he let out a soft grunt. He closed his eyes and slumped down onto the floor. He crossed his paws and rested his chin on them.

"Don't be gone for long. Jaybounce isn't looking too good, and someone needs to bring Rabbitpaw outside so that we can mourn for him. Please go get your father."

"Mine?" Spottypaw asked.

Peacepaw glanced over at Beechdew, a question in her eyes as well. Was Beechdew speaking to him, or Peacepaw? Did he want her father, or his?

Beechdew opened his eyes, and he gave it a moment's thought. After a second of contemplating, he finally shrugged. "I suppose you should get both Rockfang *and* Oddtail. It might take both of them to carry Rabbitpaw out of camp."

Spottypaw looked over at Rabbitpaw's body, and he tilted his head to the side. It was so hard to believe that Rabbitpaw was just... **Gone**. He would never see this cat ever again. His deputy was already preparing for him to be buried...

Spottypaw didn't have much time to dwell on the fact that his Clanmate was dead. Peacepaw was already out of the den, and Spottypaw quickly pursued her. He could hear Bramblefrost following both of them. He could feel the tom's icy green gaze boring into the back of his head, and it made his skin itch with discomfort.

He's still mad at me about the kits...

He was glad that Peacepaw had unintentionally intervened. Even though he was with a group of cats, Bramblefrost always had a way to get back at him without getting caught. He was just sneaky like that.

"I wonder what Featherheart will name them," Peacepaw mewed excitedly. "She hasn't shared any ideas with me since she found out that she was carrying kits."

"She's not naming any of them," Bramblefrost growled from behind them.

Spottypaw shrugged his shoulders as they headed towards the warriors den. Peacepaw was ignoring Bramblefrost quite easily. Spottypaw was trying hard to ignore the older cat's presence.

"I guess we'll find out -"

"I *just said* that Featherheart isn't naming my kits, for StarClan's sake. Have you two got bees in your ears?"

Bramblefrost's voice became sharp with irritation as the two young apprentices carried on with their conversation. Or, at least they had tried to.

Spottypaw didn't want to cause an argument, but he glanced over his shoulder to finally acknowledge Bramblefrost. "Oh, really? I thought that it was ***tradition*** for the mother to name the kits."

Bramblefrost frowned almost at once as Spottypaw made his comment about the traditional naming system. Bramblefrost had an odd way of thinking, and the way that his lifestyle was didn't really suit well with the lifestyle that the Clan had now. Bramblefrost believed that she-cats should have never been allowed to become warriors or leaders, and that they were born simply for recreational purposes and raising the Clan's future generation. Toms were *supposedly* the only cats allowed to defend, hunt, and fight for the Clans, which didn't make much sense to Spottypaw. After all... Bramblefrost's own sister was Clan leader, and he seemed to admire her greatly and respect her above all other cats.

Spottypaw wasn't sure where he heard such ridiculous rules, or who he had picked up these 'traditional' ways from, but a lot of cats fortunately found it to be a little extreme. Of course, there were a few cats who seemed to like the idea of Bramblefrost's way of how Clan life should be.

Spottypaw looked away from Bramblefrost just as the tom's brows furrowed with offense.

"Featherheart can't come up with any names that are suitable for my kits. It's different when the mother of your kits has horrible taste in names," Bramblefrost argued.

"Ah. That makes sense." It didn't. Spottypaw knew that it didn't make sense. It didn't apply to Bramblefrost's beliefs, but he was willing to tweak it slightly or change the rules or conditions when it came to him.

Stupid fish-face.

With Spottypaw and Bramblefrost on her heels, Peacepaw led the two toms into the warriors den, and she made a bee-line straight towards her father's nest, where the dark furred tom was speaking in a hushed voice with Deepfang. Spottypaw left her to speak to her father, and he quickly made his way towards his own father. Bramblefrost followed him, slipping past cats and ignoring those who tried to congratulate him on being a father.

Spottypaw passed Oakwhisker, who slept with Mothshine in the corner of the den by themselves, and he finally approached his father, Oddtail. The dark tabby's back was to him, and so Spottypaw came up to him and nudged him lightly with his nose. Oddtail lifted his head from his paws, and he looked up at Spottypaw with hooded eyes. A clear liquid dripped from his nose, and his breath was hot and ragged.

Spottypaw's brows furrowed with concern, but he wasn't given a chance to say anything before his father sighed and sat up.

"Don't lecture me right now. I'm fine, Spottypaw. It's just a small... Whatever," he mewed gruffly. As Oddtail spoke, Bramblefrost leaned down and whispered in Spottypaw's ear, "I'll go tell Grayfeather that Rockfang'll need help with moving the body."

Spottypaw hesitated for a moment. He knew that the Beechdew wanted Rockfang and Oddtail to retrieve Rabbitpaw's body, but surely he would understand why Oddtail couldn't help out in this case. He was clearly sick, whether the warrior wanted to admit it or not.

Spottypaw gave Bramblefrost a small, curt nod. The warrior didn't say or do anything back. He simply turned around and left the two kin alone. Oddtail raised a brow as Bramblefrost left, and he followed the warrior with his one eye. He looked suspicious. But when was he not suspecting something of someone?

"What's going on? Besides the obvious, of course," Oddtail meowed. He turned his attention back onto Spottypaw, and his voice softened slightly. Just by the tiniest bit, of course, but Spottypaw could

notice it.

"It's... It's just..." Spottypaw stopped himself for a moment, and he felt his mouth go dry. He didn't want Oddtail to know that Beechdew wanted him to get the body. He would leave that part out. Spottypaw hung his head, his tail tip twitching with guilt and hurt all over again. "Rabbitpaw didn't make it. Rockfang and Grayfeather are going to bring his body out for us to say our goodbyes. I thought that you should know that in advance."

"Mm. I am... Sorry to hear that," Oddtail murmured. "I know that he was a good friend to you and Peacepaw."

Spottypaw nodded stiffly. It was still hard to believe that the tom was dead. Spottypaw used to get so jealous of the young warrior, and it was always over silly reasons. Now, Spottypaw would never get the chance to apologize for their skirmishes and arguments.

All because I was too proud to say sorry and admit that I was in the wrong. I was just making something out of nothing most of the time because of my own insecurities...

"Yeah. He was," Spottypaw agreed.

There were a few heartbeats of silence that they shared, but Oddtail eventually broke the silence. The scarred warrior cleared his throat, and he dipped his head.

"Thank you for telling me, Spottypaw."

Right. You're done with this conversation.

Oddtail had always hated to discuss death with others, but he absolutely hated it when it came to the death of young cats and elders. It seemed to make him hurt even more knowing that a cat so young and lively still had so much to live for, and a cat so old couldn't live the rest of their life in peace. Spottypaw grieved for everyone equally, but his father? His father just had a soft spot for the young and the old apparently.

Spottypaw turned around, leaving his father to think about the unfortunate events of the day. He could see Bramblefrost speaking

to Grayfeather, but once the tom noticed that Spottypaw was leaving he quickly cut Grayfeather off with a lash of his tail. Spottypaw tore his gaze away from the tom, and he hurried out of the den without waiting to see if Peacepaw was still speaking to Rockfang or not.

Cold air hit his pelt as soon as he stepped out from the den, and he took a deep breath to clear his lungs. He hadn't realized just how hot and muggy it was in the den in comparison to the outside world. It was refreshing, to say the least.

Without wasting another moment, Spottypaw then headed towards the nursery, and he didn't dare look back. Bramblefrost probably wasn't that far behind him at this point.

"Spottypaw, you walk much too fast," Peacepaw chirped as she came up on his left. She leaned close to him, her whiskers brushing against his cheek. "Don't make it so noticeable," she murmured in a lower tone, "you'll make him suspicious."

Spottypaw flicked an ear in understanding, but he said nothing in response. He knew that she had a point... But he couldn't help himself sometimes. Bramblefrost just made his pelt crawl in the most uncomfortable way.

Without saying anything else, the two young cats entered the nursery, and they were greeted with the smell of warm milk and moss. The fragrance was comforting... It reminded him of when he was being nursed by his mother, Dewbloom.

"Move out of my way," Bramblefrost snapped from behind them.

Spottypaw didn't have any time to move before the striped tom came shoving past them, causing Spottypaw and Peacepaw to split up. A prickle of anger stirred within Spottypaw as he watched the tom walk past Skywish and quickly take a seat behind Featherheart.

Peacepaw looked just as annoyed, but that feeling seemed to disappear as soon as her eyes settled on the two tiny bundles of fur laying at Featherheart's belly. The dark furred cat bounded forward, her eyes shimmering with excitement.

"Great StarClan, they are so cute! I was expecting them to be a little smaller, but they're perfect!"

Peacepaw's voice held an overwhelming amount of love and pride as she crouched down to sniff the kittens. Spottypaw came up beside her, and he looked down at the two kittens with slight interest. He watched them suckle on their mother, their tiny paws kneeling her belly as they fed.

He didn't like the way they smelled...

"They are perfect in every way," Featherheart whispered lovingly. "Aren't they, Bramblefrost?"

The she-cat looked up at her mate with weary but excited eyes. The birth had taken a lot out of her, but she was slowly regaining her strength.

Bramblefrost let out a small grunt. "They don't look anything like me..."

"Well... No, but they're still perfect," Featherheart murmured, her ears flattening with doubt. "They're exactly what we wanted -"

"Did you give birth to a tom?" Bramblefrost leaned over her, giving each kit a quick look over. He appeared to be skeptical about something.

But what?

"Yes, Bramblefrost, she gave you a son," Skywish grumbled. The plump she-cat sat a few nests away from them, her leg propped up so that she could clean herself. "Can you shut up now and show some excitement for your mate?"

"Which one is it?"

The tabby's ears were now perked up with interest, and he glanced at Featherheart as he waited for her answer. Featherheart gave one of the kits, a dark tom-kit with darker spots, a gentle nudge with her nose.

"That's Spotkit."

"*Moldkit*," Bramblefrost corrected. "I want his name to be Moldkit. Our daughter... Her name will be Pebblekit. Or perhaps Ashkit. I will have to think about it."

Peacepaw frowned at Bramblefrost, lifting her head up to give the tom a dirty look.

"Featherheart already has names picked out for the kits, Bramblefrost. I don't believe -"

"No, no, they're perfect! I love the names," Featherheart interrupted quickly, her eyes flickering onto Peacepaw for a moment to stare at her. She gave a slight tail twitch in her direction, and then she looked back up at Bramblefrost with a smile. "Moldkit and Pebblekit. Lovely names, dear."

Spottypaw glanced over at Featherheart, and then down at Peacepaw. There was a temporary tension between them that any cat with a brain would be able to notice, but it didn't last for long before a deep voice called into the nursery.

"It's time to bury the dead."

Word count: 4017

Chapter Three

I apologize for any grammar mistakes or mistakes in general...

Dark clouds hung in the sky this afternoon, and the air smelled musky and reeked of crowfood. Spottypaw could tell that it was going to rain soon, and a part of him couldn't wait for it. He missed the feeling of having small droplets of water running down his pelt.

A flash of brown fur caught Spottypaw's wandering gaze, and he turned his attention back onto Petalstar, watching as the calico jumped onto the willowstump. The small she-cat tucked her tail by her hind legs, and she raised her head to peer down at her clan mates.

"I've called a meeting with you all to discuss the reoccurring issue with ShadowClan crossing the border. As we are all aware, every patrol I've sent out so far has come back with news of discovering ShadowClan cats deep in our territory. I can only assume that they are searching for prey beyond their own borders."

"Vixenstar *did* say that they've been struggling to provide food for the Clan," Weedfang muttered to Pinewater.

"It's not the first time that ShadowClan has broken the rules," grumbled Palestone, who sat in the very back of the group of gathered cats. "They're mangy rats who'll stoop as low as dirt to get what they want."

A few cats murmured in agreement, but Spottypaw said nothing. He just stayed by Peacepaw's side, listening to the news with interest.

"As much as I would love to help ShadowClan with their problem, I know that we are not doing very well ourselves. We don't have prey to provide for others." Petalstar flicked an ear with thought, her green eyes roaming over her clan mates. "If word got out about us helping another Clan, then we'd risk being taken advantage of by the other Clans."

"It's so sad that this is happening to everyone," Peacepaw whispered into his ear. "We're all just trying to survive..."

Spottypaw peered over at Peacepaw for a moment, but he quickly shifted his attention back onto Petalstar.

Peacepaw was better than him. He didn't feel a flicker of pity for the other Clans.

"So, what are we going to do about them?" Bramblefrost meowed.

"In times like this, we can't afford to appear passive and submissive," Pinewater added with a gruff scoff at the end. He glanced around at his Clan mates, and then back up at Petalstar. "We can't just *ignore* them any longer, Petalstar. That has gotten us nowhere."

Oakwhisker rolled his eyes. "Oh, it's gotten us somewhere, alright. We're fighting crows for scraps of carrion, and our bones are slowly appearing more with each passing day. That's where it's gotten us."

Petalstar's eyes narrowed as soon as Oakwhisker spoke so sarcastically about her past decisions to try and be peaceful with ShadowClan. She had spoken to Vixenstar many times about this reoccurring issue, but clearly the other she-cat wasn't respecting RiverClan's wishes.

And the basic rules in general, Spottypaw thought with irritation. *They truly are the rats of the Clans.*

"I understand all of the frustration," Petalstar meowed coolly as a few of the cats below mumbled their agreements with Pinewater and Oakwhisker. "And I agree that my words with Vixenstar were not respected by her or her Clan, which is why I wanted to discuss this with you all. I want us all to understand why I will be making the decision that I'm about to make, and why you must follow these orders."

Peacepaw furrowed her brows in worry as Petalstar made this new announcement, and Spottypaw almost felt like he was going to simply *pop* with overwhelming curiosity and excitement. He was

interested in how Petalstar would now go about this issue with ShadowClan.

When Petalstar felt as though every cat was listening, she continued in her calm, almost monotone voice now. "ShadowClan will push us to starvation and homelessness if I allow them to continue stealing our prey and going beyond their borders. Clearly talking about it has no effect, so we will be taking action from here on out -"

"Thank StarClan," whispered Stormpaw. "That Firepaw cat has really been needing a nip in the tail for a while now."

"You're just jealous that he caught that bird before you," Spiderpaw teased, whispering into Stormpaw's ear.

Stormpaw flicked that ear in irritation, and his head snapped in the tall apprentice's direction. He opened his mouth into an open scowl, but Skywish swatted his shoulder to shut him up.

"- I give every cat here the permission to attack if necessary," Petalstar meowed over the whispering apprentices. She gave Skywish an appreciative blink before speaking with more determination, more authority. "If you can chase them off our territory without having to bring harm to both sides, then I beg you to go down that path. However, if they are putting up a fight, I understand that we must fight back. The only fights I do not want are those that will lead to death, or those that you *know* you are outnumbered by."

Spottypaw's ears perked higher at this, and his eyes gleamed with interest. Of course, he knew that he wouldn't be able to participate in the fights because he was a medicine cat in training...

But if I come across any ShadowClan rats, I'll be sure to send them back to their muddy swamps, back where they belong!

"Peacepaw, isn't this great?" He purred with pride. He glanced over at Peacepaw, expecting her to be thrilled that RiverClan was finally standing their ground. "ShadowClan will finally take us seriously! We won't have to starve anymore."

But he wasn't met with anything relating to excitement or pride or joy. In fact, Peacepaw looked... Worried. Her eyes were cast down, her ears low and her brows still furrowed with disappointment.

"We should be working together to help one another, not be at each other's necks," Peacepaw murmured. She shook her head, and then looked back at Spottypaw with hurt in her light blue eyes. There was so much anguish in those eyes of her's, that it almost hurt Spottypaw to even look at her. "I understand that ShadowClan is being difficult, but fighting them surely isn't going to make things better?"

"Oh, mouse-brains," Spiderpaw shot at Peacepaw, looking over her shoulder to stare down at the dark gray apprentice. She rolled her eyes, as if Peacepaw were a silly kit. "I love you, Peacepaw, but we can't be peaceful with another Clan when they have no respect for us. Talking didn't work, remember?"

"ShadowClan has to learn one way or another," Stormpaw grumbled.

"Okay, so you think fighting is the way?" Peacepaw asked with a wrinkle of her muzzle. She then glanced over at Stormpaw. "You think that fighting won't just lead to more bloodshed?"

Stormpaw paused for a moment, as if he truly gave his sister's questions a bit of thought, before he simply gave her a blank stare. "ShadowClan killed Otterstrike, and now Beechdew is wounded. I have to get assigned to a *new* mentor all over again. We didn't harm any ShadowClan cats at that point in time, and we never avenged my mentor's death either. They chose to start this bloodshed, not us, Peacepaw."

"And I'm not going to argue with a cat who hasn't had to fight for her life," Spiderpaw meowed, her voice sharp and full of arrogance. "Maybe once your ribs are like mine, and you've had to fight another cat just to keep the prey that *you* caught, maybe ***then*** I'll hear you out. Until then, I believe that fighting for our Clan and our lives comes before anything else."

Spottypaw watched as every cat seemed to be engulfed in their own

conversations, their own arguments and own thoughts. Petalstar was already heading back to her den with Rockfang and Pondfrost, and no cat was really discussing this as a whole anymore.

But I suppose Petalstar said what she had to say. No one argued with her or disagreed with her... Aside from Peacepaw, but I guess I should've expected that from her.

While he respected Peacepaw and her desire for the Clans to have a mutual relationship and respect for one another, as it was once like before the attacks from The Saviors started, he didn't necessarily agree with everything that she said or believed.

Such as right now.

Spottypaw had never cared for the other Clans, honestly. He believed that his Clan came first and foremost, and if that meant that fighting was necessary, then so be it.

"Getting revenge isn't going to make things better, Stormpaw... He's in StarClan now -"

"But it's what he would've done for me," Stormpaw muttered. He looked away from Peacepaw, his claws sinking into the pebbles below his soft pads, and he gritted his teeth. "Otterstrike would've hunted Bonewhisker down if I were the one to die that day. I know he would've."

Skywish, who had been silent the entire time, gave her son a gentle lick over the ear. Her eyes were soft and loving, yet she seemed to share the same amount of grief as Stormpaw did.

"I understand both sides completely, my kits," she murmured. "Peacepaw isn't wrong for having her feelings and opinions, and neither are you, Stormpaw, because I have been in both positions before. Revenge is not a horrible thing, but to think of nothing but getting revenge will swallow you whole and make you bitter and angry. But not fighting back will give the enemy the idea that we are weak and cowardly, and not willing to fight for ourselves."

Peacepaw peered over at her mother, still disappointed aboyt the

situation, it seemed, but looking a bit more hopeful now that someone was being a bit more understanding of her thoughts. Stormpaw simply shrugged his shoulders, but he gave his mother's neck a quick nudge before he stood up and left the group of cats.

Spiderpaw stood up as well, and she bounded after Stormpaw, her tail straight up in the air and a bounce in her step.

Spottypaw, Peacepaw, and Skywish watched them go to the apprentices den, and then Skywish sighed.

"He and Otterstrike were so close. It's a shame that ShadowClan had to take this route," the slightly plump she-cat murmured.

Spottypaw dipped his head in understanding. "It is... Especially since Petalstar gave Vixenstar so many chances to change her behavior and stop her Clan from continuing these attacks on us."

Peacepaw was quiet for a moment, her tail flicking back and forth as she stared at the ground in silence. Spottypaw could tell that she was thinking things over, trying to figure out if she possibly had missed something in the conversations. She often did that, he noticed...

"I... I understand why we're doing this. I just wish there was another way," Peacepaw finally whispered, her voice strained with emotion. "I really don't think that fighting is going to do either Clan any good. But I don't understand why Vixenstar can't pull off her cats and have us meet together to discuss an alliance or something, or do anything at all to make this work! I don't understand why it has to be like this at all."

With tears in her eyes, Peacepaw stood up and turned her back on her mother and Spottypaw, and she ran straight into the medicine den. Spottypaw got to his paws as well, his heart aching as he saw how frustrated and confused his friend was.

She's right. This isn't fair to anyone... But ShadowClan started it. We're just defending ourselves!

A tail fell onto his shoulders, and he glanced over to see that

Skywish was standing beside him, her eyes fixed on the mossy curtains to the medicine den entrance.

"Let her handle this on her own for a moment. She doesn't want comfort right now, she wants answers, and you can't give them to her, little one."

"But -"

Spottypaw opened his mouth to argue, but Skywish only peered down at him with a sharp look. Spottypaw quickly slammed his jaws shut, but he couldn't help the look of irritation that crossed his gaze. Skywish shook her head, looking away at the apprentice with a soft sigh.

"You think she wants comfort, but that's not what she wants, or what she needs. Think about it. If she wanted comfort, she would've stayed with you, or gone to Mintpaw or Woodpaw, right?" She murmured.

The question threw Spottypaw off, a bit of surprise in his eyes once he realized that the she-cat was right, much to his displeasure. Peacepaw wouldn't have left him if she wanted a shoulder to lean on, or to hear him yap. She clearly wanted some time to think...

"I guess so," he finally muttered. "I just don't like seeing her like that."

Skywish let out a *mrreow* of soft laughter, and she gave Spottypaw's head a light nudge with her nose. "Neither do I, but I know that it's good for her to have a bit of time to cool down and think things over properly. I hate seeing her hurt, but I know it's best for her to have her space for a moment."

She leaned back up, and she shook out her pelt with a huff. Glancing over at the leader's den, she gave a slight snort of disapproval.

"I have a feeling that Rockfang is going to be taking over Beechdew's duties until he's better," she muttered.

Spottypaw looked in that direction as well, remembering how

Rockfang had gone inside the den with Pondfrost and Petalstar. He gave a slight shrug.

"He could be. He has the qualities to make a good deputy," he meowed.

Skywish only grunted in response, which kind of surprised Spottypaw. Wouldn't she be excited that her mate was being noticed for his leadership skills? He had the potential to become the next RiverClan leader in the future.

Spottypaw glanced back at Skywish, but the she-cat was already taking off towards the nursery.

"Feel free to come visit the kits if you have nothing to do," she called over her shoulder. "Moldkit and Cinderkit could probably use a check-up."

The blue-gray she-cat slipped through the moss curtains and into the nursery, but Spottypaw didn't follow her. He didn't want to be stuck with kitten-sitting duties. It always started off as a check-up, but then the queens would leave one-by-one to go socialize or relax elsewhere.

Which I guess I can't blame them for, he thought with a bit of guilt. *They're pretty much stuck in there until the kits are ready to become apprentices.*

Spottypaw shifted on his paws, staring at the nursery as he tried to think of whether he should go in there and offer to watch the kits for the mother's that deserved a break. It wasn't something he wanted to do, but he knew that it would bother him all day if he didn't do it.

He sighed in defeat as the decision was made for him, and he padded over to the nursery as well. His Clan mates were still discussing the decision that Petalstar had made, but a few others were talking about tragic events from the other day.

Rabbitpaw's death was still a fresh wound for RiverClan.

The stench of milk hit Spottypaw's nose before he even entered the

nursery, and he padded into the den with a slight shudder as he was surrounded by gloom and the faint smell of a crow.

"Spottypaw!"

The high-pitched mewl made Spottypaw's ear flick in discomfort, but he purred in greetings as three bundles of fur came charging at him.

"Beetlekit," he meowed, leaning down to touch noses with the blue eyed she-kit. "Have you grown any taller since yesterday? You seem so much bigger!"

Beetlekit touched noses with him, her eyes glittering in the gloom with pride. "I think so! Momma says I'm going to be super tall, like my papa!"

"It's a load of fish tails!" Lowkit shouted, standing up on his hind paws as he leaned up against Spottypaw's shoulder. "I'm going to be waaaaay taller than her, right, Spottypaw? *I'll* be as tall as papa, not her!"

Bumblekit, the oldest of the kits, scoffed as he sat beside Beetlekit. "I'm already taller than both of you shrimps, and I bet I'll be taller than Deepfang, too."

"OoOoO, maybe we can rename Lowkit to *Shrimpkit*," Beetlekit teased.

"Beetlekit, stop teasing your brother," Airblossom purred softly from her nest. Her blue eyes glimmered in the gloom, and Spottypaw could practically feel the love and care rippling off of her.

"Yeah, *Beetlekit*, stop teasing me," Lowkit muttered.

Spottypaw shook his head, amused by the kits banter. He then looked over at Airblossom, and he noticed that Skywish was grooming Featherheart's pelt nearby. Skywish glanced over at Spottypaw and then flicked an ear with approval.

Featherheart opened her eyes, a look of exhaustion on her pretty face. She lifted her head from her paws and furrowed her brows

with curiosity.

"What brings you in the nursery, Spottypaw?"

"Yeah, why are you here?" Bumblekit meowed.

Skywish snorted. "Don't be rude, Bumblekit."

Bumblekit's jaw dropped slightly, as if he were offended by Skywish's words, and he looked over at his sister.

"I wasn't being rude! I was just asking a question, like Featherheart did," he retorted.

Spottypaw took a step forward, interrupting the two kin before an argument could break out.

"I thought it would be nice to watch over the kits and give you mothers a bit of time to yourselves. I haven't got much to do, so... I just thought that you all could use a break. Catch up with family, eat, and other stuff," he mumbled.

Airblossom let out a *mrreow* of amusement as Spottypaw got a little flustered, and she stood up from her nest. She arched her back, pawing at the nest as she stretched her limbs.

"That's very kind, Spottypaw. I'll gladly take your offer."

"Me too," Skywish meowed, standing up to her paws as well. She shook out her pelt and glanced down at Featherheart. "What about you, sister? Are you going to join me and Airblossom for some prey and gossip? I heard that Acornclaw has a crush as of lately."

Featherheart looked over her shoulder and up at Skywish with a hint of concern in her eyes.

"Oh, I don't know," she murmured, looking back down at her belly. Spottypaw narrowed his eyes, trying to get a better idea of what she was looking at, and that's when he noticed the two kits by her belly. They practically blended in with her fur. "I don't think that Bramblefrost would want me to leave the kits."

A spark of annoyance went off within Spottypaw, and he had to hold back an eye roll. Skywish, of course, didn't hold back at all. The larger she-cat scoffed, and then she looked over at Airblossom with a *I-told-you-so* look. Airblossom stuck her tongue out at Skywish and then padded over to Featherheart.

"It would only be for a moment, love. Me and Skywish never leave the kits for long," she explained, giving Featherheart's ear a gentle nuzzle. "Besides, you could use a break, and I'm sure that Bramblefrost would understand. A quick wash, a bit of prey, and some friendly chatter would do wonders for you."

A gentle purr rose from Featherheart's throat as Airblossom nuzzled her ear, and she was quiet for a moment as she gave it some thought. After a heartbeat of consideration, she finally nodded her head.

"You're right. I deserve a moment for myself," she chirped.

Featherheart stood up and then gave her two kits a quick examination. After checking them out and making sure that they were okay, she then looked over at Spottypaw.

"Make sure to keep them warm, please. I won't be gone for long."

And with that, the three queens bounded out of the nursery, whispering and giggling like apprentices as they ran outside to enjoy their kitten-free time.

Spottypaw chuckled, shaking his head as he walked over to Featherheart's nest and circled them carefully. He had plenty of practice on how to properly keep kits warm, and how to ensure that he didn't overheat them or give them chills, either.

He then plopped himself down, making sure to curl his tail around the two kits. He tilted his head in curiosity, looking at the kits with observant eyes. One kit was quite large in comparison to the other, and it had a light gray pelt with white dapples and dark gray dapples as well.

Well, I guess it's not necessarily dapples. They look more like a mottled

furred kit.

He then glanced over at the other kit, and he noticed that this one looked more like Featherheart. It had a light silvery-gray pelt, but it had dark flecks under the eyes, and dark ear tips.

Beetlekit popped up behind Spottypaw, her paw steps silent and undetectable, and she peered down at the kits over Spottypaw's shoulder.

"The big one is Moldkit," she mewed. "Cinderkit is the small one."

"Mm, right. Brother and sister, yeah?" Spottypaw asked, wanting to make sure that the genders were confirmed.

Lowkit padded up to Spottypaw and nodded. "Yup. They're the new brother and sister duo."

"*I* think that we'll be best friends when she's able to talk and do fun stuff, aside from sleep and cry," Beetlekit said with excitement. She stared at Cinderkit with adornment. "We'll probably be the bestest of friends, just like how you and Peacepaw are."

Bumblekit, who was grooming himself, looked up at Beetlekit, his tongue sticking out from between his jaws. He shook his head, and then he stood up and headed over to the group of cats.

"I thought that me and you were best friends?" Bumblekit and Lowkit meowed at the same time.

Lowkit glanced over at Bumblekit, and then he frowned. Bumblekit rolled his eyes at the black-and-white kit.

Beetlekit giggled, shaking her head in amusement. "You two *are* my best friends, but she'll be my first best friend that's a she-kit, like me!"

Spottypaw chuckled as the kits began to bicker. Lowkit shot Beetlekit a dirty look, clearly not happy about being replaced by Cinderkit.

"You can't have three best friends!" Lowkit huffed.

"Yeah, *Beetlekit*, that doesn't make any sense," Bumblekit argued. "Cats only have one best friend, like Spiderpaw and Stormpaw -"

"But Peacepaw is best friends with Spottypaw and Mintpaw," Beetlekit shot back. She lashed her tail with annoyance as her friend and brother argued with her. "I don't have to just have one best friend."

"Yeah, you do," Bumblekit muttered. "And it's obvious that Peacepaw likes -"

"Well, if you're going to have Cinderkit as your best friend, then I'll have a new best friend, too," Lowkit interrupted, puffing his chest out. "He's way cooler than you, anyway."

Beetlekit rolled her eyes in exasperation. This clearly wasn't the first time that they had talked about this *new best friend.*

Bumblekit groaned, slumping against Spottypaw's tail and rolling onto his back. "Imaginary friends don't count, bird-brain."

Spottypaw found the whole ordeal to be amusing, and he couldn't help but listen to them bicker and talk. The way that they spoke so seriously about this best friend situation was quite hilarious.

He rested his chin on his paws as Lowkit's ears flattened with offense.

"He's not imaginary at all. He's real, and he's super cool," Lowkit snapped back. "He knows how to fight, too, and he's a lot smarter than you two frog-sniffers."

"Oh yeah?" Beetlekit meowed. "Then why haven't you told us his name?"

Spottypaw pretended to look surprised at this odd situation, and his ears perked with mock curiosity. "Jumping fish, he has a name?"

"Of course he has a name, stupid."

Lowkit raised his chin, snorting at Spottypaw with annoyance. He then turned on his little paws and marched over to his mother's

abandoned nest. He curled up in a ball, tucking his nose under his tail.

"But only special cats get to know his name. And he says that none of you are special," he grumbled.

Word count: 4055